

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 16951 131457Z
ACTION NODS-00

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S E C R E T CAIRO 16951

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PEPR EG IS
SUBJECT: PREPARATION FOR LONDON TALKS

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 8771 (B) CAIRO 16878

1. DAYAN'S COMMENTS REPORTED REF A ARE INTERESTING. I
NOTE IT HAS ALREADY BEEN LEAKED TO THE ISRAELI PRESS
THAT ANOTHER ROUND OF TALKS AFTER LONDON MAY TAKE PLACE
AT AL ARISH. DAYAN QUITE RIGHTLY TALKS ABOUT THE DE-
SIRABILITY OF ALL PARTIES HOLDING THEIR TONGUES AT THIS
CRITICAL STAGE, BUT THE ISRAELI EXAMPLE IN THIS REGARD
IS HARDLY ENCOURAGING. EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS HAVE
BEEN ENGAGED THESE PAST SIX MONTHS OR MORE IN A BATTLE
FOR WORLD, AND ESPECIALLY AMERICAN, PUBLIC OPINION, IN
WHICH THE ISRAELIS HAVE THUS FAR COME OFF SECOND BEST.
RECENT ISRAELI STATEMENTS SUGGEST THAT THEY ARE VIGOR-
OUSLY SEEKING TO REDRESS THE BALANCE. NO ONE CAN BLAME
THEM. BUT IN CONTEXT UPCOMING LONDON MEETING, IT SEEMS
TO ME THAT WE HAVE TO STRESS TO BOTH SIDES THAT NEITHER
GAINS IF IT IS ALLOWED SIMPLY TO BECOME A PART OF THE
PUBLIC RELATIONS BATTLE.

2. I ALSO NOTE DAYAN'S VIEW THAT IF KAMEL IS RELUCTANT,
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WE SHOULD NOT PUSH FOR A BILATERAL MEETING BETWEEN THE
TWO. DO NOT KNOW HOW MUCH IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO SUCH
A BILATERAL MEETING, BUT I SUBMIT THAT IF DAYAN IS NOT
ESPECIALLY INTERESTED, WE SHOULD THINK TWICE BEFORE
PUSHING THE IDEA. LITTLE, IF ANYTHING, WILL COME OUT
OF IT. IN AN EARLIER TALK, SADAT HAD NO OBJECTION TO
ONE OR MORE BILATERAL KAMEL/DAYAN MEETINGS. JUDGING

FROM KAMEL'S SUBSEQUENT COMMENTS TO ME, HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT DID NOT MENTION THIS TO HIM. KAMEL HAS THROUGHOUT BEEN RELUCTANT TO MEET WITH DAYAN ON A BILATERAL BASIS, FEARING THAT DAYAN WILL DISTORT ANY PRIVATE TALKS THAT THEY MAY HAVE. HE HAS AS LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN DAYAN AS DAYAN HAS IN KAMEL. OUR PROPOSED LONDON TALKS SCENARIO WILL REQUIRE SADAT AND KAMEL TO FOCUS AGAIN ON SUCH BILATERAL MEETINGS AND KAMEL WILL DOUBTLESS ARGUE HIS CASE AGAINST THEM. UNLESS KAMEL MAKES A MAJOR ISSUE OUT OF THIS, SADAT IS LIKELY IN THE END TO BE GUIDED BY OUR VIEWS. IN TALK WITH ACTING PRESIDENT MUBARAK EARLY THIS MORNING, HE SAID THAT HE IS STILL AWAITING SADAT'S RESPONSE TO OUR PROPOSED SCENARIO AND HOPES TO HAVE IT LATER TODAY.

3. MFA UNDERSECRETARY KHALIL TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT, ON KAMEL'S INSTRUCTIONS, VARIOUS MFA DEPARTMENTS ARE DRAFTING QUESTIONS ON THE ISRAELI WEST BANK/GAZA PROPOSAL WHICH KAMEL CAN USE DURING LONDON TALKS. AS REPORTED REF B, I ALSO EMPHASIZED TO MUBARAK AND USAMA AL BAZ THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EGYPTIAN SIDE HAVING GOOD QUESTIONS TO PUT TO DAYAN. AT THE TIME, NEITHER MUBARAK NOR AL BAZ (WHO IS STILL NOMINALLY AN MFA UNDERSEC) SEEMED TO BE AWARE THAT KHALIL'S OFFICE HAD BEEN TASKED WITH THE JOB OF PREPARING QUESTIONS.

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4. I WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS URGE EGYPTIANS APPROACH LONDON TALKS IN A POSITIVE SPIRIT, BUT I CONFESS THAT I HAVE ONE SERIOUS MISGIVING. THE ISRAELIS ARE NOW PRESSING SADAT ON WHETHER HE IS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE THE WEST BANK/GAZA IF HUSSEIN IS UNWILLING TO DO SO. SADAT SAYS THAT IF THE CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT, HE IS WILLING TO DO SO. UNLESS HUSSEIN CAN SOMEHOW BE GOTTEN INTO THE ACT, THIS IS RISKY BUSINESS FOR SADAT AND WE COULD BE BUILDING ON QUICKSAND. EGYPT HAS SOME RESIDUAL STANDING IN GAZA WHICH WOULD ALLOW IT TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT THERE, BUT IT HAS NO RPT NO STANDING IN WEST BANK MATTERS. I RECALL THAT BEGIN INITIALLY SCOFFED AT THE IDEA THAT SADAT MIGHT BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE WEST BANK ARRANGEMENTS. BEGIN DID SO PRECISELY ON THE GROUNDS THAT EGYPT HAS NO STANDING IN THE WEST BANK AND HE WAS RIGHT. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, IT IS INEVITABLE THAT EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATORS, BE THEY SADAT, KAMEL OR SOMEONE ELSE, WILL HAVE TO TAKE A RELATIVELY HARD LINE ON WEST BANK MATTERS LEST THEY OFFEND HUSSEIN, THE PALESTINIANS AND THE SAUDIS LET ALONE THE RADICAL ARAB STATES.

5. ALL OF THIS, IT SEEMS TO ME, EMPHASIZES THE CONTINUING ESSENTIALITY OF GETTING A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WHICH WILL OFFER SOME PROSPECT OF ATTRACTING HUSSEIN INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS. DAYAN MAY NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF REVERTING TO NEGOTIATIONS ON A DECLARATION OF ASPECTS OF A NON-SINAI ASPECTS OF A

PEACE SETTLEMENT. EILTS

NOTE BY OC/T: CAIRO 16951 PARA 5 AS RECEIVED, CORRECTION TO FOLLOW
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